

**TESTIMONY OF BRETT DIAMOND SUBMITTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS AND HIGHER EDUCATION
COMMITTEE ON FEBRUARY 15, 2017**

H.B. No. 7027 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 2019

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee, I currently am a student at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine where I am a board member for the Inter-Professional Education Clinic at the Covenant Soup Kitchen coordinated by Eastern CT Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Inc. Health profession students of various disciplines come together to host a free walk-in clinic for soup kitchen patrons and other members of the community who have trouble accessing health care. Students are provided with opportunities to practice effective communication skills within the context of coordinating services with a diverse patient population. I was born and raised in Newington, CT and currently reside in Farmington, CT and am proud to call Connecticut my home.

The CT AHEC Program or network directly supports primary care workforce development in the state by “connecting students to careers in health, professionals to communities, and communities to better health.” Funded since 1997, the CT AHEC Program provides state-wide services to more than 10,000 residents, annually (<http://www.publichealth.uconn.edu/ct-ahec.html>). As the demographics of the state continue to change, the primary care workforce must expand and respond to meet those changes. The CT AHEC Program is an invaluable resource to address these challenges at both a state and local level.

The CT AHEC Program utilizes federal, state and private funding to support:

- Inter-professional education and community based training programs for health professions students
- Promotion and retention of primary care providers in collaboration with state agencies
- Cultural competence and medical interpreting training to health professionals and trainees
- Dissemination and recruitment of health professional trainees in the National Health Service Corps
- Continuing medical education programs for public health and health care professionals
- Pipeline educational programs to raise awareness of health careers for pre-health professions learners

Supported by federal, state and private dollars, the CT AHEC Program Office is located at UConn Health in Farmington, CT. The 4 regional AHEC Centers in collaboration with the Program Office extend UConn Health’s reach state-wide. The AHEC Program responds to local needs and partnerships that address community health needs which include oral health, veteran’s mental health, youth mental health first aid, teen health literacy, homeless and migrant farm worker access to health care.

I have been fortunate to be part of this program which allowed me to further my life and educational experiences. The Willimantic Clinic supported by AHEC is a crucial program providing care to at risk patients. As students, we are incredibly grateful to be able to serve this community and have learned lessons in caring for the underserved that will help us out our entire career. These clinics provide much needed care to those in need in Willimantic while helping develop the next generation of health professionals to help care for the underserved throughout the state of Connecticut. We are incredibly grateful for the funding that we do receive and hope it will continue in the future as we believe this program to be a vital part of public health in the state of Connecticut.

Eastern CT Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Inc. is part of the Connecticut AHEC Network (CTAHEC) and was established in 1997. It provides its services and support in New London County and Windham County.

I personally feel that if CT AHEC Network is not restored to its funding level of \$406,723 that it would be very detrimental to the community. The proposed budget cut for Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 to \$378,349 will directly hinder the great work that CTAHEC has done and continues to do daily. I cannot express the consequences and unreplaceable void this would leave for the state of Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony. Below is my contact information for your convenience.

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